

ATP Final Report

ELK KNOB COMMUNITY HERITAGE ORGANIZATION (EKCHO) Public Art Project

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**Project duration
August 25, 2010 – February 1, 2011**

**Today's date
March 4, 2010**

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Final Report Narrative

Name of Project: ELK KNOB COMMUNITY HERITAGE ORGANIZATION (EKCHO) Public Art
_Project_____ **Grant Period:** ___August 25, 2010 – February 1, 2011

Grantee Name: Appalachian State University **Project Director:** Dr. Patricia D. Beaver_____

Description of Project: Fall semester 2010 students in ANT 5120 worked with the Elk Knob Community Heritage Organization (EKCHO), formed in 2008 by community members of Meat Camp, Pottertown, and Sutherland, North Carolina. As a result of a 2009-2010 public art planning grant to EKCHO from the NC Arts Council, in July 2010 ASU's Center for Appalachian Studies joined in partnership with EKCHO and the Watauga County Arts Council for the purpose of implementing a five year public art plan for the EKCHO area. The public art plan is intended to promote sustainable development of the Elk Knob community, and curiosity about and understanding of the culture, history, and natural world on and around Elk Knob by all people. Four public art sites have been identified, and during the fall semester, students met with members of the Pottertown community at Elk Knob Missionary Baptist Church to generate content ideas for development of public art at the first of the sites, the Eller Store. Students used this and other fall events and resources to develop materials for an EKCHO documentary project, for the public art project website, and for a final report to the EKCHO public art partnership and to the ARC. Students used photography, video recording, sound recording, historical and community research and writing, beginning with Elk Knob Community Day, September 11, and culminating in a presentation of their video documentary to the EKCHO Community and community participants on Tuesday evening, March 1, 2011 (we were snowed out of the planned public showing in December, and this was the first EKCHO board meeting since that time).

Activities:

- Class met regularly for academic discussion, lectures, training in field research methods, study and analysis of assigned readings, writing and research assignments, and discussion of community work.
- Students participated in a very rainy Elk Knob Community Homecoming September 11 including managing equipment, scanning photos, filming events and interviews, conducting oral histories, and transcribing, archiving, and processing those materials.
- Students arranged meetings in the community, initially in Pottertown at Eller's Store through ECKHO, to facilitate, document, and deepen the discussion of important community stories upon which the community's reputation has been built.
- Students conducted additional research to contextualize the community's history from the Civil War forward, following the course of the community's main road.
- Students prepared a video documentary for the EKCHO and summary information for presentation to the ATP meeting in Washington.

Project Outcomes:

- Development of leadership and civic-capacity among the students engaged in the project
- Opportunities for students to experience various parts of the region and the work of the Commission in Washington, D.C
- Opportunities for students to share their research activities in the broader professional community of Appalachian Studies scholars and activists in the Appalachian Studies Association
- Improved working relationships among ASU, EKCHO, the Watauga County Arts Council and the Appalachian Regional Commission
- Enhancement of student and community awareness of the work of the ARC at all levels.
- A significant contribution to the community's public art and documentation goals

These outcomes were demonstrated through

- Presentation of student work at the ATP Conference in Washington, D.C., December 2-4, 2010
- Creation of a poster for presentation at the conference in Washington, D.C.
- Student participation in the Appalachian Studies Association annual meeting in March, 2011
- Effective research partnership between ASU and EKCHO
- Research that is consistent with the goals of the ARC strategic plan
- Research which capitalized on the assets which EKCHO has identified and thus contributes to community sustainability
- Presentation of students' documentary film to EKCHO in December 2010, delayed until March 1 because of snow.

Problems Encountered: Weather! For Elk Knob Community Day we had heavy rains, so attendance was down, scanning photos impossible, and video footage was minimally useful. Our community presentation was snowed out in December, so we weren't able to show it until the board met March 1, and most of the students couldn't attend (although community residents were very pleased with the documentary).

Program Continuation and Sustainability: EKCHO operates successfully with an all-volunteer board, and the relationship with ASU's Appalachian Studies program is productive. Beaver is on the Board, and was elected Secretary at the March 1 board meeting. Work with filmmaker Tom Hansell this fall was quite productive, and we (Beaver and Hansell) are planning to continue to collaborate on projects focusing on communities and resources at the headwaters of the north fork of the New River. State agencies (ASU and Elk Knob State Park) face cutbacks in resources for the upcoming budget year, though attendance at the park is increasing, and the park continues to add important properties and sites (including an African American cemetery which was a focus of ATP student research in 2000 and 2009) and the opportunities for collaboration between ASU, ECKCHO, and EKSP can only grow.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Students' collaborations with community residents were fruitful, affirming trust and confidence in the process, based on an eleven year presence, while students learned much about working in communities. The challenge is transforming their work into concrete products that benefit the community. The community would like a museum facility or other tangible community center (the EKCHO board meetings all take place in Profitt's Grove

Church). We presented our video documentary to EKCHO at the March board meeting, and have begun conversations about how to further the public art project with EKCHO next fall.

Attachments:

ANT 5120 syllabus

(Video documentary delivered to ETSU in December)